

THE CHURCH AND ITS OFFICERS.

BY J. W. BEER.

In my former article I dwelt mostly on Apostles and Deacons, giving them the precedence simply because they have priority in the scriptural record. Now I turn to

PRESBYTERS (ELDERS,) AND BISHOPS.

Hitchcock says: "It is now generally admitted that in the New Testament the terms Presbyter (Elder) and Bishop are applied indifferently to the same persons; the former taken from the Jews and suggesting gravity of character, the latter borrowed from the Greeks and denoting the nature of the office."—*Analysis*, p. 622.

I have examined several authors on this subject and find the statement of Dr. Hitchcock confirmed; but with all due respect for their superior learning and more extensive research, I venture to suggest that the admission may cover more than the facts will justify. I scarcely know how to approach this subject with the modesty that becomes so weak a vessel as confronting with "men-of-war;" or, to change the figure, how an intellectual pigmy should approach and oppose such literary and theological Gullivers. I am minded to say that it is possible for the wisest to be mistaken sometimes, and for the most ignorant to happen on a rare truth, occasionally. At the risk of being branded as an egotist (if not a heretic or lunatic), I venture the assertion, "that in the New Testament the terms Presbyter (Elder,) and Bishop are" not "applied indifferently to the same persons." While it might be allowable, sometimes, to substitute Elder for Bishop where the latter term occurs, in some instances to substitute Bishop for Elder, appropriateness and gravity would have to pander to an ostentatious dignity to an extent that is not allowable.

The Greek for Elder is *presbuteros*, and for Bishop, *episkopos*. Grove in his "Greek and English Dictionary" defines these terms thus:

PRESBUTEROS, (comparative of *presbus*.) older, senior, more ancient, preferable, more honorable. Substantive: an elder, presbyter, senator, father; an ambassador.

EPISKOPOS (from *epi*, intensive, and *skopeo* or *skopeno*, to survey), an overseer, inspector, supervisor, superintendent; a bishop; a president, governor, ruler; a scout, spy, sentinel.

In comparing these definitions it will be seen that *episkopos* is always an official title, while *presbuteros* is frequently applied to natural and honorable relationships. This difference obtains to some extent in the New Testament usage of these terms, and it is only when they are used strictly in the sense of overseers, and expressing no other idea or sentiment, that they "are applied indifferently to the same persons." B. Wilson says: "*Presbuteros*, an Elder, which occurs sixty-seven times, and is applied to seniors, or persons advanced in years, ancestors, fathers; or as an appellation of dignity to chief men, heads of families or of congregations. Apostles are sometimes called Elders, in the sense of senior, or old man. See John 2nd and 3rd epistles, and 1 Pet. 5:1." After some additional statements, he adds: "Elder, as the name of an officer in the Christian congregation, is defined Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5, 7: and is evidently synonymous with bishop, shepherd, ruler, &c., and the same duties of overseeing, ruling, teaching, &c., were attached to the office."

This is truth, and it is only when the terms are applied to the overseeing "officer in the christian congregation," that they are synonymous. Surely no one would think of substituting Bishop for elder when the latter term is used "in the sense of a senior, or old man," even when applied to an apostle.

The Apostles of Christ, no doubt, were Elders or Bishops, ex-official; and yet they did not apply the terms "indifferently," even to themselves. When reference was made exclusively to the office, Bishop was selected: "His bishoprick let another take," Acts 1:20; "If a man desire the office of a Bishop," 1 Tim. 3:1. But when age or gravity was implied, Elder was used: "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder;" "Likewise ye younger submit yourselves to the elder;" 1 Pet. 5:1, 5. "The elder unto the elect lady and her children," 2 John 1; "The elder unto the well-beloved Gaius," 3 John 1.

Where the sacred writers make a distinction, we should recognize it. Let us read a few texts by substituting bishop for elder. "Ye younger submit yourselves to the Bishop," 1 Peter 5:6; "The Apostles and Bishops came together," Acts 15:6; "Round about the throne were four and twenty seats; and upon the seats were four and twenty Bishops sitting, clothed in white raiment" (the cut of the raiment is not given), Rev. 4:4; "And I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the Bishops," Rev. 5:11; "The four and twen-

ty bishops fell down and worshiped him that liveth forever and ever." Rev. 5:14. It might do, brethren, but I want no man to print it so in the Bible that I am to read.

I hope I am understood. I am not saying that the terms Elder and Bishop, or *presbuteros* and *episkopos*, are never applied to the same persons or to persons in the same office; but I am contending, and have shown, that there is a shade of difference in their meaning and that they are not "applied indifferently to the same persons" in the New Testament. While they are sometimes applied to the same persons, or to persons in the same office, in every instance there is a divine reason for selecting the term that is used; and there are but few places where either term can be safely substituted for the other.

Let us now take up the history of these terms as applied to Christians. The first use of the term Elder, applied to Christians, is in Acts 11:30. In the time of the "great dearth" in the days of Claudius Caesar, the disciples at Antioch "determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea; which also they did, and sent it to the Elders (*presbuteros*) by the hands of Barnabas and Saul." Here in A. D. 41 or 42 we find elders in Judea, probably at Jerusalem. See Acts 12:25. Now, who were these elders? Were they Bishops? Were they Apostles? Were they merely aged disciples? Or is it not highly probable that in this case the Elders were the deacons or their successors, who had been appointed to attend to this business? We have no account of the ordination of any bishops at Jerusalem, and it seems improbable that such an important event would escape the notice of the sacred historian, who so minutely describes the election, appointment, and ordination of the Deacons. Neither was there any necessity for the ordination of Bishops at Jerusalem at this time, for at least some of the apostles were yet there; and they were still there ten years afterward at the time of the notable council, the minutes of which are found in the fifteenth chapter of Acts. It does not seem probable that the Apostles are here called Elders; for when the seven were chosen the Apostles were excused from serving tables. And it does not seem reasonable to suppose that this burden would be laid on any disciples merely because they were getting old, and especially when in that same church there had been a solemn ordination of a college of honest, discreet and pious persons to attend to such duties. Who, at Jerusalem, was authorized to receive "relief" for "brethren which dwelt in Judea"? None but the seven or their successors. This was their duty, their service, their "business"; and until it can be shown that there were Bishops ordained at Jerusalem, I shall continue to hold to the only reasonable view, that these Elders at Jerusalem were the Deacons.

Elders next occurs in Acts 14:23: "And when they had appointed for them Elders in every church." I have quoted from the Revised Version. The A. V. reads, "And when they had ordained them Elders in every church," upon which Thomas Williams in Cottage Bible, remarks: "Almost every word in this short sentence has given ground for controversy, of a nature which we purposely avoid. We shall only remark on the word *Elder*, (Greek, *presbuteros*.) that it is agreed, first, to refer to age; and secondly, to official character; and that consequently, it may in different texts, refer to persons reverend either in age or office." This is true, and in some texts it refers to age, in some to office, as I have shown that in Acts 11:30 it means the Deacons. Elders, in this text, however, means overseers, or Bishops.

In the 15th chapter of Acts it occurs several times: "They determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain other of them should go up to Jerusalem unto the Apostles and Elders about this question." "They were received of the church, and of the Apostles and Elders." This was, no doubt, at a meeting formally called. "The Apostles and Elders came together for to consider of this matter;" but in presence of the people (verses 12, 22, 23). "Then pleased it the Apostles and Elders, and the whole church." "And they wrote letters by them after this manner: 'The Apostles and Elders and brethren send greeting.'" Now, who were the Elders in this council? They were not the Apostles, for they are mentioned; and they were not the laity, for they were designated the "whole church" and "brethren." They were not the messengers from Antioch, for they "were received of the church and the Apostles and the Elders." We still have no account of the ordination of Bishops at Jerusalem, and there was no need for it as the Apostles were yet here. If they were the aged brethren, is it not strange that there was nothing said of the Deacons, of whose ordination such a careful minute is made, and who are eminent for honesty, piety and wisdom? These Elders were the Deacons, I have no doubt.

In Acts 16:4, we have the language: "They delivered them the decrees for to keep which were ordained of the Apostles and Elders which were at Jerusalem." Elders means the same here as in the 11th and 15th chapters—the Deacons. But in the 20th chapter, 17th verse, it means Bishops or overseers. It is there said of Paul: "From Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the Elders of the church." To them he said many things of thrilling interest, and among the rest, "Take heed, therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers" (*episkopous*, bishops). In this instance *presbuteros* and *episkopos* are applied to the same persons and office, and that office was to oversee and take care of the flock. Their duty was to watch over the flock; to take care of "all the flock," that none become a prey to the wolves, which were sure to come; to feed the church of God, by declaring, as Paul had done, "the whole council of God"; to "support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

We come now to speak of Paul's epistles to Timothy and Titus. In 1 Tim. 3rd chapter, he speaks of the qualifications of Bishops (verses 1-7,) and Deacons (verses 1-38.) He calls neither of them Elders in this chapter; but they were both entitled to the appellation; for we have found Elder (*presbuteros*) to be a generic term applicable to the aged, to Deacons, to Bishops, and even to the Apostles themselves. But in chapter 5:1, 2, 17, 19, we find Elder and Elders, which we will notice.

V. 1. "Rebuke not an Elder, but entreat him as a father; the younger men as brethren." Here "Elder" and "younger men" are in antithesis, showing that Elder, in this text, means a senior, an old man.

V. 2. "The elder women (*presbuteras*, elderly women) as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity." Here "elder women" and "mothers" are in antithesis with "younger" and "sisters," which is additional evidence that in the first verse Elder means an old man.

V. 17. "Let the Elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in word and doctrine." In this text Elders is applied to ruling officers. But who are these officers? Are they Bishops, or Deacons, or both? "Of course," says one, "they are the Bishops." Peradventure, but I fail to see it as a matter "of course." The moral qualifications of Bishops and Deacons are the same; the intellectual qualifications are very similar; and about the principal difference is that the Elder must be a good teacher—"apt to teach,"—while the Deacon holds "the mystery of faith in a pure conscience." There is also such a blending of their duties that it is difficult to tell where one ends and the other begins. Bishops oversee and labor for the spiritual welfare of the church, as related to its temporal interests; and Deacons look after the temporal interests of the church, as related to its spiritual welfare. Both are overseers and servants, presiding or exercising superintendence in their respective fields of labor or lines of work; but Bishops "labor in word and doctrine"—they preach; while deacons do not—it is not required of them. I hold that in this text "Elders" is applied to both Bishops and deacons; and Deacons "that preside well" (which is a better rendering,) are worthy of more honor than Bishops who do not. But, whether they be Bishops or Deacons, "let the Elders who preside well, be esteemed worthy of double honor," &c.

V. 19. "Against an Elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses." I hold this to mean an old man, a Bishop, or a Deacon. The old man should be respected and treated as a father; and official brethren who are faithful, as worthy of double honor; and all are to be held as innocent until proven guilty. A complaint against an elder may be heard; but it may not be received as an accusation, or charge, unless sufficient witnesses are found to establish his guilt. To do so would breed trouble and bring reproach upon the cause to no purpose. This is a safe rule to apply in all cases; and if it were generally observed, much trouble, pain and shame would be avoided.

In Titus 1:5 we find Elders, and Bishops in verse 7. The terms are here applied to the same persons, or rather the same office. Nothing is said of Deacons. Bishops are deacons, ex-official; and they can perform their duties until they interfere with their own proper work; then they may proceed to the election of deacons, as was done at Jerusalem by the Apostles.

The length of my paper admonishes me to stop for this time. In my next I will say more about Bishops, Elders and Deacons, and perhaps take in the Evangelists. I should be glad to hear from others on this subject.

VANITY.

BY EMMA M. STAUFFER.

"Turn mine eyes from beholding vanity."

The above is part of one of the prayers of David; and when we study the record of his life, from his anointing by Samuel until, when old, and honored by all the people he died, and was buried in Jerusalem, we find it one of the most entertaining in sacred story, and we are impressed that the keenest sorrows of his eventful life were occasioned by his not turning his eyes from vanity, or, as Isaiah writes it, shutting them from seeing evil. Evidently this prayer was one learned from the sufferings of experience, and like the transgressor of to-day, David was not content only in divine forgiveness for past error, but prayed for a safeguard which would preclude a recurrence of the same. This old time prayer can profitably instruct us.

Turning our eyes from vanity, in its full sense, will save us many of earth's bitterest sorrows and disappointments. Mean, petty envyings and jealousies and fault-finding, which afflict some people, and with which they sometimes can make great mountains of heartache out of little mole hills of non-essentials, by attending other people's business rather than their own. These come of not turning the eyes from vanity; not "closing the ears to it, not sealing the lips from uttering it, come of forgetting the golden rule; by seeing and hearing and telling the mean things that never benefit us and harm others. Could we but remember how "He that speaketh uprightly, that stoppeth his ears from hearing and his eyes from seeing evil," how such ones are to "dwell on high, see the King in his beauty, and behold the land that is very far off," then would human frailty refer judgment of fellow beings to Him who has commanded us to not judge. Then would the vain refrain from these vanities in the happy consciousness that He, who is so great and so loving in his kindness to remember we are dust, will do all things well.

Some persons define vanity as excessive dress, gaudy putting on of apparel, and generally associate it with women; but in the Old Testament, I find no connection of vanity with woman or her dress. Some of the prophets make grand comparisons of her adorning and ornaments to holy and beautiful things. On the other side numerous allusions are made to man; how he is "altogether vain, like to vanity," and so on. Then there are warnings concerning vain thoughts, words, philosophy, repetitions, conversations, and such,—all things proceeding from the hearts of humanity, not put on the outside. These are vanities to strive against, and if we, unwisely, class the adorned maidens with them, and the sight of her worries us, let us remember the prayer of David, and turn our eyes from beholding her.

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To Make a Happy Home.

1. Learn to govern yourselves, and to be gentle and patient.
2. Guard your tempers, especially in seasons of ill health, irritation, and trouble, and soften them by prayers and a sense of your own shortcomings and errors.
3. Never speak or act in anger until you have prayed over your words or acts, and concluded that Christ would have done so in your place.
4. Remember that, valuable as is the gift of speech, silence is often more valuable.
5. Do not expect too much from others, but remember that all have an evil nature, whose developments we must expect, and which we should forbear and forgive, as we often desire forbearance and forgiveness ourselves.
6. Never retort a sharp or angry word. It is the second word that makes the quarrel.
7. Beware of the first disagreement.
8. Learn to speak in a gentle tone of voice.
9. Learn to say kind and pleasant things whenever opportunity offers.
10. Study the character of each, and sympathize with all their troubles, however small.
11. Do not neglect little things, if they can effect the comfort of others in the smallest degree.
12. Avoid moods and pets and fits of sulking.
13. Learn to deny yourself, and prefer others.
14. Beware of meddlers and tale-bearers.
15. Never charge a bad motive if a good one is conceivable.
16. Be gentle and firm with children.
17. Do not allow your children to be away from home at night without knowing where they are.
18. Do not allow them to go where they please on the Sabbath.
19. Do not furnish them with much spending money.